

BREEDING HABITS OF SOME SNAKES AND LIZARDS.

BY

REV. F. DRECKMANN, S.J.

The name viper was originally applied to all poisonous snakes under the idea that this class was distinguished by its viviparous habits ; this idea has long been found to be erroneous as all the poisonous colubrine land-snakes, the cobra, krait, &c., are, as far as we know, truly oviparous, and on the other hand the colubrine water-snakes, whether poisonous or not, are viviparous ; many of them inhabit the open sea and it would not be easy for them to find a place where they could safely deposit their eggs. Those poisonous snakes, however, which belong to the now restricted order of "vipers"—viperidæ—were still considered to deserve their name and to be without exception viviparous, but of late their claim to this distinction has also become more than doubtful.

In 1904 we received a note from the Rev. G. A. Miller, of St. Joseph's College, Darjeeling (*c.f.* Journal, B. N. H. S., XV, page 729), in which he informed us that he had received a number of eggs which on being hatched turned out to be eggs of *Lachesis monticola* ; from two of them the young ones issued whilst they were under observation. The Rev. gentleman was kind enough to send us one of the young ones together with the shell from which it had escaped, and one of the eggs cut open with the fully developed embryo inside : both are undoubtedly *L. monticola*, one of the *Crotalidæ* or pit-vipers. The Editors of our journal added the remark : "We now possess the important evidence that this viperine snake is oviparous." Its very close ally, however, *L. gramineus*—a common snake of our ghauts—is certainly viviparous ; for this I have very good evidence as one of them gave birth to a healthy family of fully developed live young ones whilst I held it in my hand.

At our last meeting Col. Bannerman showed us two very interesting exhibits. One of them was a cluster of eggs laid by a Russell's viper in captivity and the other one a batch of young ones born alive by another snake of the same species. Here we have incontestable evidence of the same snake—a typical viper—being both oviparous and viviparous. It appears from these facts that a snake being oviparous or viviparous cannot any more be considered as a generic